

Statement of Chairman Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Creating an Interoperable Public Safety Network”
May 25, 2011
(Remarks Prepared for Delivery)

Today’s hearing is focused on the technology and expertise needed to produce an interoperable communications network for our nation’s first responders. This is by no means the first hearing on this issue, nor the first attempt by Congress to give public safety the tools needed to make interoperable communications a reality.

The 2005 DTV legislation cleared a 24 MHz block of spectrum nationwide for public safety’s exclusive use – a key recommendation of the 9/11 Commission. I proposed the amendment to that legislation to provide \$1 billion for interoperable equipment. In all, CRS reports that public safety has been given \$13 billion dollars from the federal government for radio equipment since 2001.

Despite these tools, public safety’s interoperable network still remains elusive.

The question is, what will bring us closer to making interoperable voice and broadband communications a reality? Some say we should reallocate the D block. But current law requires that spectrum to be auctioned and doing otherwise would create a roughly \$3 billion dollar hole in the budget that we cannot afford.

Today we will discuss ways to meet public safety’s technological needs while leveraging the competition and innovation that have characterized the commercial wireless marketplace. This dialogue is a critical component of a winning public safety strategy. America’s commercial wireless providers are world leaders in technology, spectrum efficiency, and innovative services. Cooperation between the robust commercial

sector and the critical public safety sector will not only permit each to focus on what they do best, but will make both sectors stronger in this tough economy. I thank the witnesses and look forward to their testimony.